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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BA](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAINI FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT IRAQ

REF: MANAMA 940

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) In an August 27 meeting covering several subjects, Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa told the Ambassador that he was concerned about the direction of the draft Iraqi constitution. Referring to the August 22 version of the document that was presented to the Iraqi parliament, Shaikh Mohammed said there was "too much religion" in the text of the preamble and Article 1. This type of thinking could take Iraq back to a time when women had to cover and there was no liquor in the country, he complained.

2. (C) Shaikh Mohammed commented that "the Kurds are asking for too much" -- they already have their own parliament and 70,000 peshmerga fighters. Demanding the division of the country's oil wealth "would be the end of Iraq." He was particularly upset about language characterizing Iraq as part of the Islamic world and Iraq's Arabs being part of the Arab world. He argued that Iraq was a founding member of the Arab League and was an Arab country even if there were non-Arab citizens. Morocco has Berber citizens but the country is still considered to be Arab. He said Bahrain was less concerned about the article on de-Baathification.

3. (C) Shaikh Mohammed worried about Iranian influence in southern Iraq. He asked, "Is this what the United States fought for?" He said Iran no doubt was pleased with Shia influence within the Iraqi government but does not want that government to succeed, possibly because Iran's clerical leaders fear their citizens could view the Iraqi government as a model for their own.

4. (C) The Ambassador asked that Bahrain not pre-judge the constitution before seeing the final text. International reactions will have an impact in Iraq. Bahrain should urge Iraqis to move forward towards the referendum and the next elections. He suggested that Bahrain issue a positive public statement about the constitution when it is settled so Iraqis know their neighbors support them. Shaikh Mohammed said that he will leave Manama September 4 for a GCC foreign ministers meeting in Jeddah. He requested that the Ambassador provide him with an update on the state-of-play and the USG position on the constitution before that meeting.

5. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that Bahraini charge in Baghdad Hassan Al Ansari, who was wounded in an assassination attempt July 5 (reftel), will return to Bahrain from Germany this week, where he underwent treatment for his wounds. The ForMin said that an Iraqi guard posted outside the Bahraini Embassy in Baghdad was kidnapped August 24 and his captors demanded a \$250,000 ransom. The GOB refused to pay and the guard was released soon afterwards. An Iraqi-Bahraini dual national employee of the Embassy fled in fear to Amman.

MONROE